

## A Survey on the Reading Habits among Colleges of Education Students in the Information Age

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### Abstract

Reading is the gateway to success in education. It is the heartbeat of all courses offered in institutions. It is therefore crucial to investigate Colleges of Education students reading habits and how to improve the skill. The study was a descriptive survey with a validated questionnaire on “Reading Habits among Colleges of Education students in the Information Age” (RHCESIA). A total number of two hundred (200) students were used from the two Colleges of Education in Oyo town, with gender and age as the moderating variables. The findings showed that almost all the respondents understand the importance of reading. 65.5% love to read from their various fields of specialization on a daily basis while 25.0% love reading from their fields of specialization every week. The study confirmed that good reading habits enhance academic performance. The study recommended that courses on communication skills should be included for the first year (100 level) students and prose work and fiction such as novels should be a compulsory course for second year students (200 level)

**Keywords:** Reading, Reading Habits, College Students

### Introduction

It is an irrefutable fact that reading is paramount for academic development. Academic attainment at the tertiary level is a multiple characteristics that involve effective language use, efficient study skills, effective learning and students’ personal features. In Colleges, success is connected to reading. To obtain the required points, students are required to master all the courses taken. Students are expected to read, so as to get the expected grade point. Achievement in the Colleges requires awareness of facts and acquisition of skills in the field of study. All these can be acquired through reading.

The habit of reading does not reflect in the lives of most students in Colleges and Universities. It is believed that a College learner knows how to read, what to read, when to read and where to read. The assumption states that students must have a book to read at a particular time, whether for pleasure or to pass examination. Based on this premise, the researchers intend to carry out a survey on the reading habits among Colleges of Education in the information age.

### Reading as a Basic Skill

Reading has come to stay as a potential force in education and all spheres of life. Reading as one of the skills of literacy is the defense against solitude. It is man’s pane into life. Reading conveys the past and the future into the present. Reading provides experience through which the individual may expand his horizons of knowledge, identity; extend and intensify his interests so as to gain deeper understanding of himself. (Rout and Chettri, 2013). Reading is the position of the utmost character that helps to pass on knowledge and virtue through ages.

Reading has undergone tremendous changes in meaning and understanding over the years. The classical definition of meaning as the extraction of visual information from a given symbol or code has informed various meanings. Smith and Robinson (1980) explain ‘reading as an active attempt on the part of the reader to understand the “writer’s message’’. Quadri and Abomoge (2013) refer to reading as a key to wealth of experience that links people in a way far beyond distance or time. It can be inferred thus, that reading creates remarkable experience that unlocks the gate of success to a student. It is an important skill for learners to be able to cope with the advancing world. Reading is a conscious literacy process that influences the extent and accuracy of information as well as attitudes, beliefs and judgement of a reader (Panigrahi and Panda, 1996 in Rout and Chettri, 2013). Reading is also viewed as a cultural enhancer (Holte, 1998). Reading boosts the quality of life, reinforces and merges people together in a unifying force.

### Reading Habits in Tertiary Institutions

Reading is an activity oriented skill. It involves the mechanics of the brain and the combination of other organs before comprehension occurs. This activity becomes a habit when it is frequently carried out. Reading habit stimulates the promotion of ones personal development and social progress in general. This habit is usually considered in relation to the amount of materials read, the frequency of reading and also the average time spent on reading (Wagner, 2002). Reading habit depicts the behaviour which expresses the likeness of reading of individual types of reading and tastes of reading (Sangkaeo in Rout and Chettri, 2013). An individual structured

his reading in a way that suits his tastes. Shen (2006) categorizes reading as how often, how much and what a student reads at a particular time.

Over the years, the innovation in information technology and the media have made students to read books less and get more involved in watching television, chatting online and getting more deeply engrossed in the activities in the social media. Researchers have dedicated much effort to investigating students' reading habits. Bullent (2002) groups the levels of reading of 108 children between ages 11 and 12 into four groups: the heavy readers (that is reading 24 or more books per year or 2 books per month); the moderate readers (reading 1 – 23 books per year or 1 book per month) rare readers (reading 1 – 6 books per month) (1 book every 2 months) and the non readers.

Yilmaz (2000) discovered that the majority of the students (77.8%) do not possess any reading habits, wherein (8.5%), which is the smallest percentage are heavy readers. Hastings and Henry (2006) in Loan (2012) observed that more than half of the students that is (56%) spend less than half an hour a day on reading and (13%) are non readers. Also, the downward trend of reading habits of College students was witnessed in United States of America by a research carried out by National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 2008, it was (51.7%) compared to 1982 with (59.8%).

In all these researches, findings revealed that reading habits are connected with students' gender and age. These factors are germane to students' interest in reading. Stenberg (2006) and Ross (2002) in Lane (2012) give account of females as heavy readers to males. Clark and Foster (2005) reveal that girls enjoy reading greater than boys and boys, most times have a negative attitude towards reading. Hassell & Rodge (2007) report females reading for pleasure to male counterparts. Studies also indicate that students hardly read more than 2 hours in a day (Blackwood, 1991). Also Dipika and Md.Mehedi (2013) reveal that most men read newspapers compared to females.

It could therefore be said that the reading habits of students in all the surveys carried out, can be categorized as heavy readers (reading various texts and novels as much as possible and as many times as possible in a month); moderate readers (reading few texts and novels as seem convenient for them); dormant readers (those who liked to read and they regarded themselves readers but did not take time to read regularly and update their knowledge). These readers give priority to other social activities such as sports, partying and school work. Unmotivated non readers (those who do not have any inclination to read neither are they open to the suggestion of future reading nor do they have any positive attitude towards people who read).

### **Benefits of Good Reading Habits**

Students can invariably improve their reading habits based on the inherent advantages:

1. Good reading habits increase students' reading skills (Reyhene, 1998)
2. Reading habits widen students experience and knowledge (Green, 2002).
3. Good reading habits develop reading speed, fluency, vocabulary, general knowledge and academic achievement (Cunningham & Stanovich (1998) in Chettri & Rout 2013).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Teaching and learning in the tertiary institution is faced with endless problems on the part of the learners due to their non mastery of the skills implicit in reading. For an outstanding performance, there is the need for students to cultivate effective good reading and studying habits. It is however sad to note that the mass and social media have taken the position of reading among students. Beyond this, the by-products of scientific and technological inventions have adversely contributed to the declining standard of active reading among students (Owusu-Acheaw and Larson, 2014). Presently, parents complain about students who have not been able to develop good reading habits. Even teachers complain about students who engage in phone chats in the lecture rooms. It is based on this premise that this study was conducted to investigate the reading habits among Colleges of Education students in the information age.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the study is to ascertain the reading habits among Colleges of Education students in the information age. Specifically, the objectives of the study include the following:

1. To determine students reading preference in relation to academics and leisure.
2. To verify if gender has any influence on the reading habits of students.
3. To determine if age of the students have any effect on the students' reading habits.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were generated to guide the research:

1. What are the reading habits among College students in Oyo?
2. Is there any influence of gender on the reading habits among College students?
3. Does age has any impact on students reading habits in Colleges?

## Methodology

This study was carried out in Federal College of Education (Special) and Emmanuel Alayande College of Education in Oyo, Oyo State. The population of the study included the NCE II of both schools. Students of this level were chosen because they have experience of school life and they have the knowledge of what reading in the tertiary institution entails. A total of two hundred (200) students were used i.e one hundred (100) from each institution. Twenty five (25) respondents were randomly selected from each school in the College. A questionnaire on “Reading habits among Colleges of Education students in the Information Age” (RHCESIA) was designed to elicit information from the students.

## Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population consisted the NCE II students of the Federal College of Education (Special) (FCES) and Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, (EACOED), Oyo. Simple random sampling technique was employed to select two hundred (200) students from both schools. One hundred (100) students from FCES and one hundred students from EACOED.

## Instrumentation

A structured questionnaire of 20 items on “Reading Habits among College Students in the Information Age” (RHCESIA) was administered on the students of FCES and EACOED.

## Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was constructed by the researchers and was validated with the use of Cronbach Alpha method of establishing reliability coefficient, with a reliability coefficient of 0.75.

## Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed using Simple percentages, Mean scores, Standard Deviation and Analysis of Variance (ANNOVA)

RQ1: What are the reading habits among College students in Oyo

**Table 1: Reading habits among College students**

		Daily		Weekly		Once a month		Once a year	
		Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%
1	Textbooks from various fields	124	62.0	57	28.5	17	8.5	2	1.0
2	Bestsellers	82	41.0	61	30.5	44	22.0	13	6.5
3	Motivational books	11	55.5	52	26.0	31	15.5	6	3.0
4	Novels	107	53.5	57	28.5	29	14.5	7	3.5
5	Biographies	90	45.0	58	29.0	40	20.0	12	6.0
6	Areas of specialization	131	65.5	50	25.0	18	9.0	1	0.5
7	Informational books	104	52.0	59	29.5	26	13.0	11	5.5
8	Magazines	85	42.5	69	34.5	37	18.5	9	4.5
9	Internet	126	63.0	58	29.0	13	6.5	3	1.5
10	Textbooks	123	61.5	60	30.0	11	5.5	6	3.0

Table 1: showed the reading habits of College students in Oyo. From the table 62% of the student aimed that they love reading textbooks from various fields on a daily basis, 28.5% read textbooks from various fields on weekend; 8.5% of them said that they read textbooks from various fields, once in a month while 1.0% claimed that they read textbooks from various fields once in a year. Also, 41.0% said that they like reading bestsellers from novels and other prose works on a daily basis. 30.5% attested that they like reading bestsellers from novels and other prose works on weekend; 22.0% of the College Student afforded that they like reading bestsellers from novels and other prose works once in a month, while 6.5% of the college students affirmed that they like reading bestsellers form novels and other works once in a year. In the same vein, 55.5% of the College students love reading motivational books on a daily basis, 26.0% read motivational books once in a week while 3.0% of them read motivational books once in a year. The table also showed that 53.5% of College students love reading novels on weekend, 14.5% of them love reading novels once in a month while 3.5% of them love reading novels once in a year. Also, 45.0% of the college students attested that they love reading biographies daily, 29.0% of them love reading biographies on weekend 20.0% love reading biographies once in a month while 6.0% of them love reading biographies once in a year.

Table 1 also indicated that 65.5% of the college students love reading books in their areas of specialization on a daily basis, 25.0% of them love reading books in their areas of specialization on a weekly basis, 9.0% of them love reading books in their area of specialization once in a month while 0.5% love reading books in their areas of specialization once in a year. 52.0% of the college students read informational books on

current affairs daily, 29.5% of them read books on current affairs on weekend; 13.0% of college students read books on current affairs once in a month while 5.5% of them read books on current affairs once in a year. In addition, 42.5% of the College students read magazines on a daily basis, 34.5% of them read magazine during weekend; 18.5% read magazine once in a month while 4.5% read magazine on a yearly basis likewise, 63.0% of the college student source for information from internet when given assignment daily, 29.0% made use of the internet as a source of information on assignment on weekend; 6.5% of the College students used internet as a source of information during weekend while 1.5% of the students get information from textbooks for group work on daily basis; 30.0% of the students got information from textbooks for the group assignment during weekend; 5.5% of them used textbooks for the group work once in a month while 3.0% of the College students consulted textbooks for group work once in a year.

The results of the analysis showed that generally, all the College students participated in the study read textbooks from various fields, novels, prose works, biographies, books in their area of specialization, current affairs/informational books and magazines.

However, it was discovered from the study that barely half of the college students averagely (50%) of them affirmed that they read textbooks, motivational books, novels, books in their areas of specialization and informational/current affairs books on daily basis. This was strictly followed by reading on weekend and once in a month while few College students claimed that they read once in a year.

The study found out that half of the College students have a good reading habit since barely half of them read on a daily basis

**RQ2:** Is there any influence of gender on the reading habits among College students.

**Table2: Mean Scores of College students' reading habit based on Gender**

Group	N	Mean	SD	T	DF	Sig f
M	72	28.14	3.613	3.076	198	0.002
F	127	29.83	3.946			

Table 2 displayed the result of the analysis of the mean score of the reading habit of male and female college students which is significant at 0.05. From the table, the mean score of male and female College students' reading habits are 28.14 and 29.83 respectively, while the standard deviation are 3.613 and 3.946 for male and female College students respectively. The P value of 0.002 indicated that the result was significant at 0.05, that is  $t_{(198)} = -3.076$ ,  $P < 0.05$ . It means that gender had significant influence on the reading habits of College students.

The table showed that the female College students had higher mean ( $X = 29.83$ ) in reading habit than the male College students ( $X = 28.14$ ). The results of this finding could be as a result of the fact that female students are inclined to subjects that involve reading such as English language, Literature in English than their male counterparts that may be mathematically inclined.

The findings corresponds with Shafi and Loan (2010) which showed that females enjoy reading more than males, and females spend more time on reading than male counterparts.

**TABLE3. ANOVA showing the effect of age of students' reading habits**

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sigf
Between groups	19.470	2	9.735	.636	.531
Within groups	3000.802	196	15.310		
Total	3020.272	198			

Table 3 presented the ANOVA table of age on the reading habits of College students. The estimated F ratio from the table is  $F(2,198) = 0.636$ ;  $p > 0.05$ . This implied that there is no significant effect of age on reading habits of College students in Oyo metropolis. In other words, age does not influence the reading habits of College students in Oyo state. It means the College students' irrespective of the age have the same reading habit.

## Conclusion

The study revealed that the reading habit among Colleges of Education students in Oyo is encouraging. However, there is the need for students to read more of novels and articles in order to boost their vocabulary. Students should make the library their first point of call to get updated from time to time. Also, it was inferred that half of the respondents love reading informational books such as magazine, journals and periodicals. This can be encouraged the more, so that the students will experience all round development in their academics.

Furthermore, it can be deduced that most students read in their areas of specialization for academic development.

## Recommendations

It is therefore necessary for students to develop and initiate interest for reading more than ever before through the help of the following groups:

Parents should provide reading materials for their children. They should also create a conducive environment for them to learn and study as appropriate.

Teachers and lecturers should encourage the students to develop interest in reading by making communication skills a compulsory course for first year (100 level) students. Also, prose works, novels and fiction should be made available for students each semester. This will enhance their interest in reading and also boost effective communication competence

Teachers should also create awareness in students on the importance of cultivating reading culture by creating periods for individual and group presentation of assignments.

Librarians should make adequate and up to date books, journals, newspapers available in the library for the students to develop love for reading. Librarians should make the library environment attractive to the students. They should also organize symposiums and workshops for students on the need to cultivate effective reading culture.

Mass media should organize reading programmes for tertiary education students. This will aid creative reading and better citizens in future.

Government should organize aggressive campaign on reading for excellence by giving out scholarships and awards. They should also modify the curriculum to be task and activity oriented. This will promote positive reading habits among students.

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